



STATE OF ARIZONA

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April 25, 2006

The Honorable Jim Weiers
Speaker of the House
Arizona House of Representatives
1700 West Washington
Phoenix, Arizona 85007

Re: House Bill 2118: charter schools; fingerprinting; penalties

Dear Speaker Weiers:

Today I vetoed House Bill 2118, which, among other things, would have created a "permanent fingerprint clearance card" for certain teachers.

Arizona requires fingerprint clearance from persons who work with children and vulnerable adults to protect these important and susceptible populations from exploitation. The current clearance card system has been developed through years of experience and effort; and it works. The system requires teachers – like others who work with children and vulnerable adults – to be checked every six years to ensure they remain worthy of the trust we place in them to work with our children. The renewal process is not unduly cumbersome, but it can be important in discovering new information relevant to whether a teacher remains fit to work with children.

A permanent clearance card for some teachers with 12 years experience is not in the best interest of our children. It could preclude the Department of Public Safety from discovering important information about felonies a teacher may have committed out of state since the last check. There is no compelling need to change this law and only potentially tragic consequences from doing so.

The other provisions of House Bill 2118 are generally good, however. It is unfortunate that the permanent fingerprint clearance provision was added to this legislation at the last minute. I hope this issue will be revisited and that necessary reform for charter school compliance can move forward.

Yours very truly,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Janet Napolitano", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Janet Napolitano
Governor

JN:TN/jm

cc: The Honorable Ken Bennett
The Honorable Mark Anderson